



The Wine Advocate Issue 238
Ribera del Duero and Toro
Reviews and notes by Luis Gutierrez

August 31, 2018



Left to right: Alberto and Eduardo García from Mauro with the ancient vines that produce Terreus, one of the greatest wines from the Duero

Toro

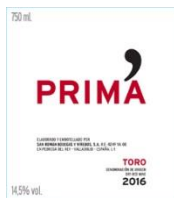
“I cannot say I found a lot of new stuff in Toro...The top of the hierarchy is still dominated by more or less the same names”

San Roman Malvasia 2017 (white) – (90-91) points

The first white from the García family in Toro, the 2017 Malvasía is sourced from one of the oldest vineyards planted with the variety (Malvasía Castellana, which is not the aromatic Malvasía most people would think about) in the appellation, from 60-year-old ungrafted vines in the El Pinar vineyard in the village of Morales de Toro. It fermented in 500-liter oak barrels, where it was kept for ten months. The vinification is very similar to the white from Mauro. The wine was still in barrel—the plan is to bottle it in August 2018—so it was a bit cloudy and reduced, with a slightly austere personality. The palate has roundness and a soft mouthfeel, with good balance, and it's not heavy despite being a warm and very early vintage. It's not clear what the variety is, but many people think it's Doña Blanca. It has 13.5% alcohol and a pH of 3.2 (quite low), meaning moderate alcohol and good freshness, as the grapes from this warm vintage were picked the 24th of August, the earliest ever. 1,300 bottles produced.



Prima 2016 – 91 points



The entry-level red 2016 Prima was produced with grapes from a cooler growing season with an early but long harvest. It's mostly Tinta de Toro with some 10% Garnacha and other red grapes. It fermented in stainless steel, including malolactic, and matured in French and American oak barrels and foudres for 12 months. They are increasing the percentage of foudres used, trying to respect the fruit. It has nice fruit and good freshness, and it's lively and fresh. This is approachable and drinkable, with a nice, soft texture, kind of light for a wine from Toro, in a way reminiscent of a red from Douro. A soft, lighter and fresher style. 215,000 bottles produced.

San Roman 2014 – 94 points



I also had the opportunity to taste the 2014 San Román, which has benefitted from one extra year in bottle. The year was less warm and ripe than 2015, but the fruit is still quite ripe, but without excess. It has nicely integrated oak and a powerful mouthfeel keeping the poise and elegance. The flavors are focused, and the end is long. 95,000 bottles produced.

San Roman 2015 – 93 points

The eponymous 2015 San Román was produced with fruit from a dry and warm year, from one of the earliest harvests to date (but records are broken almost every year, and 2017 was even earlier). It's always sourced from old, head-pruned and ungrafted Tinta de Toro vines on stony, limestone and clay soils in different villages of the appellation, including Morales de Toro, Pedrosa del Rey and San Román de Hornija. It fermented in wide stainless steel vats with indigenous yeasts and matured for 24 months in oak barrels, 70% French and the rest American. It's ripe, wide, hedonistic and generously oaked. A powerful, generous vintage of San Román. It should age nicely in bottle. 95,800 bottles were filled in January 2018.

Cartago Paraje del Pozo 2013 – 95 points



Despite the challenging conditions of the year, they also produced a 2013 Cartago Paraje del Pozo, which is a very fresh year for Toro. It has aromas of tar and licorice, a bit wild, with power and good freshness. It has abundant, fine grained tannins. This is a vin de garde, with structure and tannins, from a cool vineyard in a cool vintage, very apt to lie down in your cellar. It has already developed some complexity, notes of tea leaves, dark chocolate, meat and underbrush. Some 3,800 bottles produced.

Cartago Paraje del Pozo 2014 – 95+ points

The gran reserva style, single-vineyard 2014 Cartago Paraje del Pozo comes from a 45-year-old plot on very poor soils that, like all old vineyards, has a majority of the dominant red Tinta de Toro but has around 10% of other varieties that add complexity. This wine has an extended aging of some three years in oak barrels, and it's released one year after its bottling. 2014 is a very complete and balanced year, which has produced a concentrated and powerful Cartago, with plenty of tannins, quite tight and austere, in need to develop further complexity in bottle and to tame the tannins. It slowly opens up in the glass, showing spicier and more complex and nuanced with time and air. This could be a better wine than the 2013 in the long run. 3,900 bottles were filled in July 2017.



Ribera del Duero

2016 Arrocal – 88 points



The larger volume corresponds to the 2016 Arrocal, produced with fruit from younger vines, including some 5% Merlot. It fermented in stainless steel with indigenous yeasts and aged in French, American and Hungarian oak barrels for eight months. It's fruit-driven and quite straightforward, juicy and pleasant, with some dusty tannins. 45,000 bottles produced. It was bottled in February 2018.

2015 Passión – 89 points



The single-vineyard 2015 Passión contains some 5% Cabernet Sauvignon from a warm and dry year. It fermented in stainless steel with indigenous yeasts and matured in oak barrels for 12 months. This is not terribly complex, but it has nice fruit that still shows the vintage differences when tasted next to the 2016s. At the same time, it has less oak than the Selección, but it's still quite generously oaked. There are some dusty tannins and spicy flavors in the finish. 10,000 bottles were filled in December 2017.

2015 Arrocal Selección – 88 points



The 2015 Selección was produced with Tempranillo from a single vineyard that yields small bunches and concentrated juice. It has contained ripeness and alcohol for a warm and dry year, and it matured in French oak barrels for 16 months. Often, more expensive means more oak, which seems to be the case here; 2015 was also a riper and warmer year, and the wine shows it. There are plenty of spicy and smoky notes with ripe black fruit and a somewhat rustic palate with powdery tannins. 8,000 bottles were filled in December 2017.

2014 Arrocal “Ángel”- 90 points



One of the growing number of single-vineyard bottlings, the 2014 Ángel is produced with grapes from the vineyard planted by grandfather Ángel some 75 years ago. It fermented in stainless steel with indigenous yeasts and matured in French barriques for 20 months. It's ripe, a little heady and generously oaked, with a mixture of dark berry fruit, toast and spices and a medium to full-bodied palate with some grainy tannins and a faint bitterness in the finish. 3,500 bottles were filled in March 2017.

2014 Arrocal Máximo – 91 points



The top of the range, the 2014 Máximo is an homage to the first generation and is produced with grapes from half a hectare of El Portillo vineyard, one of the oldest vineyards in the village. It was planted with a majority of Tempranillo balanced by some 10% Garnacha and 5% white grapes that are all picked and fermented together. It matured in French oak barrels for 26 months. It seems to have some old-vine concentration and clout, and the oak feels less intrusive than other bottlings. There are ripe berries, spices and a full-bodied palate with tannins and concentration and an earthy, dusty finish. Better with powerful food. 1,000 bottles were filled in March 2017.



2015 Carravid – 88 points



The riper 2015 Carravid shows darker fruit, denoting a warmer and riper year. It's a juicy, round and lush red made with Tempranillo and 5% Garnacha and Albillo. The palate reveals plenty of oak-related flavors and texture, with abundant dusty tannins. 3,300 bottles were filled in June 2017.



Astrales 2015 – 92 points

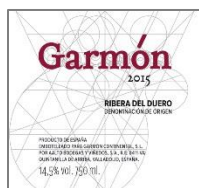
The harmonious 2015 Astrales manages to keep the poise in a warmer year, within the profile of the zone and house style, which is generously oaked and powerful but in search of elegance and balance. 70,000 bottles produced. It was bottled in July 2017.



Astrales Christina 2015 – 93+ points

The powerful and showy 2015 Christina is ripe and reached 15% alcohol. It's also generously oaked but keeps balance after 18 months in new oak barrels. It's powerful and concentrated, with spicy oak flavors but with very good balance and fine-grained tannins following the line of the 2014. 6,000 bottles were filled in July 2017.

Garmón 2015 – 92 points



The second vintage of the only wine produced here, the 2015 Garmón is from a dry and warm vintage. It fermented by plot with a pied de cuve in stainless steel vats, where the wine also underwent malolactic fermentation. The élevage was in 225- and 500-liter French oak barrels and lasted some 16 months. There was a little more new oak in 2015, and the year delivered riper wines; they tried to compensate with more grapes from cooler zones within Ribera del Duero. It has some grainy tannins and a round, wide palate. It's a more powerful vintage. 45,936 bottles and 1,768 magnums were filled in June 2017. Forty percent of the volume is exported.

Garmón 2016 – 93 points

Cropped from a cooler year, the 2016 Garmón is fresher, cooler and juicier, with elegant and polished tannins. The process is similar every year, and the differences are mostly due to vintage variations, but in this vintage, they used a higher percentage of used barriques for the élevage (50/50 new and used). 2016 is fresher, more elegant and a little lighter. It has a medium to full body and some grainy tannins. Give it a little more time before you pull the cork. 50,000 bottles produced. It was bottled in June 2018.

